

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07

TRSE-00 SAJ-01 BIB-01 /068 W
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R 141610Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8854

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

DIA

USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

AMCONGEN MILAN

AMCONGEN NAPLES

US DOCOSOUTH

SHAPEUSNR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 11367

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IT

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PICCOLI

1. CHARGE MADE COURTESY CALL ON PICCOLI, WHO HAS JUST BEEN
RE-ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC GROUP IN THE CHAM-
BER. HE

OBVIOUSLY WELCOMED AN OPPORTUNITY TO TOUCH BASE WITH THE
EMBASSY. HE BEGAN BY NOTING THAT THE ELECTORAL SUC-
CESS OF THE DC NOT ONLY ACCOMPLISHED THE TURNING BACK
OF THE COMMUNISTS FROM THE POSITION OF RELATIVE MAJORITY
BUT IT GAVE NEW LIFE TO THE PARTY AND CONFOUNDED THOSE
CRITICS WHO CONTENDED THAT IT WAS MORIBUND. PICCOLI
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SAID THAT THE EXPRESSED INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES

AND LATER OF THE WESTERN EUROPEANS IN THE ITALIAN SITUATION WAS, IN HIS VIEW, OF TREMENDOUS SIGNIFICANCE IN MOBILIZING THE ANTI-COMMUNIST ITALIAN VOTER. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE AVERAGE VOTER IS NOT STUPID AND HE RECOGNIZES ITALY'S SECURITY POSITION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND ALSO UNDERSTANDS THAT IF ITALIAN PRODUCTS DON'T HAVE MARKETS ABROAD, THE ITALIAN ECONOMY IS FINISHED.

2. PICCOLI INDICATED THAT THE NEW YOUNG DEPUTIES CONSTITUTE THE FUTURE OF THE PARTY AND THAT THEY MUST BE BROUGHT FORWARD. HE COMMENTED THAT THE OLDER PARTY MEMBERS SHOULD TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST (WE UNDERSTAND FROM MILAN'S 1613 THAT THE YOUNGER MEMBERS FIND PICCOLI RESPONSIVE).

3. THE CHARGE ASKED WHETHER PICCOLI THOUGHT ANDREOTTI COULD FORM A GOVERNMENT AND IF SO HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE. PICCOLI SAID THAT ANDREOTTI WAS THE BEST MAN TO MAKE THIS ATTEMPT BECAUSE HE HAD THE BEST RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOCIALISTS, ALTHOUGH PICCOLI THREW UP HIS HANDS (LITERALLY) OVER THE STATE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY AT THE MOMENT. HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT ANDREOTTI COULD HANDLE THE COMMUNISTS AS EFFECTIVELY AS ANYONE IN THE DC. ON THIS POINT THE CHARGE NOTED THAT OUR POLICY HAD NOT CHANGED AND THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE COMMUNISTS IN ANY ROLE IN GOVERNMENT OR IN THE AREA OF POWER. PICCOLI AGREED THAT THIS WAS THE CORRECT POSITION AND NOTED THAT EVEN AMONG THOSE LEFT-WING MEMBERS OF THE DC MOST SUSCEPTIBLE TO COMMUNIST BLANDISHMENTS THERE WAS THE REALIZATION THAT ANY MOVE WHICH WOULD GIVE THE COMMUNISTS SUBSTANTIAL POWER WOULD SPLIT THE DC AND THAT NONE OF THEM WANTED TO RUN THIS RISK. AS TO THE SPECIFICS OF ANDREOTTI'S EFFORTS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, PICCOLI SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT MOVE UNTIL AFTER THE DC DIRECTORATE MEETING TO BE HELD ON JULY 15, BUT THAT ON FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY HE WOULD BE CONSULTING WITH THE OTHER PARTIES. ON JULY 19 ANDREOTTI WOULD REPORT BACK TO THE DC LEADERSHIP TO GIVE THEM "THE FEEL" OF HIS SOUNDINGS. PICCOLI BELIEVES ANDREOTTI WILL MOVE
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QUICKLY AND WILL NOT "DEPEND ON FATIGUE" IN TRYING TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. PICCOLI DIDN'T SPECULATE ON WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF ANDREOTTI'S MANDATE WAS NOT FULFILLED.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, PICCOLI SAID THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE WORKING HARD ON AN ECONOMIC PROGRAM. HE AGREED WHEN IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THE DC SHOULD PUT FORWARD A PROGRAM OF ITS OWN RATHER THAN COME UP WITH

A WATERED-DOWN GOVERNMENT-AGREED POSITION AS IS TRADITIONAL. BEYOND THAT IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THE DC SHOULD MAKE A SERIOUS PROPAGANDA EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF ITS ECONOMIC PACKAGE USING THE TELEVISION CHANNEL WHICH IT CONTROLS. PICCOLI RECALLED THAT TWO YEARS AGO WE HAD DISCUSSED THE NEED FOR AN IMPROVED PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE DC PARTY AND SAID HE WISHED TO GET TOGETHER LATER TO DISCUSS IT MORE IN DEPTH. HE INDICATED THAT PERHAPS THIS WOULD BE SOMETHING IN WHICH WE COULD HELP THEM TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE ITALIAN PUBLIC.

5. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE TRADE UNIONS WOULD SUPPORT A TOUGH ECONOMIC PACKAGE, PICCOLI STRESSED THE NEED FOR THE DC TO DEVELOP A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH CISL, THE DC TRADE UNION. HE SAID THERE HAS TO BE A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP; THE EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO HAVE INFILTRATED CISL MUST BE THROWN OUT AND THE UNIONS ORGANIZED TO SUPPORT A PROGRAM WHICH WILL TOUCH ON SENSITIVE MATTERS, SUCH AS THE COST OF LIVING ESCALATOR PROVISION. BEAUDRY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY LEADERS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ROME11367
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760271-0681
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760759/aaaabzwt.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 APR 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH PICCOLI
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, IT, DC, (PICCOLI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006